

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8088

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POWAD

EO 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: NZ LABOR PARTYCONFERENCE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF NZ LABOR PARTY, HELD IN WELLINGTON MAY 13-16, WAS A NORMALLY LACKLUSTER AFFAIR. PM KIRK PUT IN AN APPEARANCE ON THE LAST DAY AND WAS WELL RECEIVED. GERALD O'BRIEN, BACKBENCH MP FROM WELLINGTON, WAS ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY. THE PERENNIAL REMIT CALLING ON GNZ TO LEAVE ANZUS WAS AS USUAL DEFEATED. DELEGATES REPRESENTING MAORIS, YOUTH AND WOMEN PICKETED THE CONFERENCE FOLLOWING A DECISION BY PRESIDENT CHARLES BENNETT THAT TIME DID NOT ALLOW FOR A READING OF THEIR REPORTS. FOL-PARTY RELATIONS WERE SHOWN TO BE IN GOOD REPAIR. END SUMMARY.

2. NORMAN KIRK, LOOKING PALE AND FATIGUED AND USING A CANE, PUT IN AN APPEARANCE ON LAST DAY OF CONFERENCE. HIS RECEPTION LEFT NO DOUBTS AS TO HIS LEADERSHIP OF PARTY. HIS SPEECH, GENERALLY A RECAP OF GOVERNMENT'S
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SUCCESSES OVER THE PAST YEAR, WAS FORCEFUL (ESSENTIAL

AT A LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE), BUT NOT NEW (OF PERIPHERAL VALUE AT A LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE). DESPITE ILLNESS, KIRK REMAINS FIRMLY IN CHARGE.

3. THE ELECTION OF GERALD O'BRIEN AS VICE PRESIDENT OF PARTY WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. ALTHOUGH FIVE CANDIDATES CONTESTED POSITION, THE LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE JOB WAS LOW. THIS WAS BEST DEMONSTRATED BY THE ABSENCE FROM NEW ZEALAND OF BRIAN SEDDON (NUMBER TWO VOTE GETTER) DURING MOST OF APRIL. O'BRIEN IS A YOUNG, AMBITIOUS OUTGOING, SYCOPHANT WHO MAY BE ABLE TO USE THE VICE PRESIDENCY AS A STEPPING STONE TOWARD A FUTURE CABINET POST, EVEN PM IS RIGHT IN NOT RESPECTING HIM. PREVIOUS INCUMBENT, EDDIE ISBEY, DECIDED TO STAY OUT OF RACE AND DEVOTE HIS FULL-TIME EFFORTS TO BEING PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF LABOR.

4. DUE TO THE PRESS OF TIME MAORI, YOUTH AND WOMEN'S GROUP REPU WERE NOT PERMITTED TO REPORT ON THEIR ACTIVITIES FOR THE PAST YEAR. THIS LED TO A HALF-SERIOUS PLACARD WAVING DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF THE CONFERENCE HALL. THE DEMONSTRATION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN THAT GROUPS INVOLVED ARE ALMOST ASSURED A HEARING AT NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE.

5. THE USUAL REMITS CALLING FOR IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL FROM ANZUS, RECONITION OF PRG, AND WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION FROM SAIGON WERE ALL DEFEATED. THESE REMITS CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO APPEAR IN YEARS AHEAD AS IN YEARS PAST SINCE THEY ARE PERENNIALY POPULAR WITH LEFT WING. WHILE GOVERNMENT CANNOT AFFORD TO ENTIRELY IGNORE THE LEFT, THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THE PRESENT CABINET (OR ITS SUCCESSOR SHOULD LABOR BE RETURNED NEXT YEAR) WILL CHANGE ITS POLICIES IN THESE AREAS.

6. TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT WAS ASSURED IN SPEECH BY FOL SECRETARY JIM KNOW PROVIDED GNZ CONTINUES ITS POLICIES ON FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING, APARTHEID AND MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS (KRAFTCO.). LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOL PRESIDENT SKINNER MANAGED TO GET A STANDING OVATION IN RESPONSE TO HIS SPEECH CALLING FOR A QUICK RETURN TO FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND A CONTINUED FIRM STAND AGAINST MULTINATIONALS. IN A MOVE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY MINISTER JUSTICE FINLAY CONFERENCE ADOPTED A REMIT CALLING FOR AMENDMENT OF 1973 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT IN ORDER TO GIVE UNIONS PROTECTION FROM COURT INJUNCTIONS. REMIT IS NOT BINDING AND IS UNLIKELY TO

EVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY AS ALW.

7. COMMENT. THE NORMAL LACK OF ANY COLOR OR ENTHUSIASM IN THE 1974 LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE WAS PARTICULARLY TO BE EXPECTED GIVEN ITS MID-TERM TIMING. THE 1973 CONFERENCE WAS A TIME FOR REJOICING OVER LABOR'S VICTORY IN THE PREVIOUS ELECTION AND THE 1975 VERSION WILL BE ONE OF PREPARATION FOR ANOTHER CAMPAIGN. THE ONLY REASON ADVANCED FOR HOLDING ANY CONFERENCE THIS YEAR IS THAT IT IS DONE, OLD COBBER, ANNUALLY. GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR WAS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT CONFERENCE. THIS, COMBINED WITH AN EASING OF WAGE CONTROLS, LEFT DELEGATES WITH LITTLE TO DEBATE OR ARGUE ABOUT. GOD'S IN HIS HEAVEN, NORM KIRK IS PRIME MINISTER. IF ALL ISN'T RIGHT WITH THE WORLD IT IS AT LEAST NOT TERRIBLY UNSATISFACTORY.
SELDEN

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